SSP award, end of FY13 progress report

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Project: Identification of previously undocumented Florida Grasshopper Sparrow occurrences on public and private lands, and confirmation of the current population status and distribution
BASIS+ project: BB00EH8, Task 15.5

On April 1, 2013, Loren Gallo started her employment as a contractor to USGS to conduct population surveys on the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow (FGSP) at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park (KPPSP) during the breeding season, April – July. Survey method training was provided by KPPSP Biologist, Paul Miller, who has been conducting FGSP surveys for 12 years. Many individuals from various groups, including USFWS, were trained during the first week of April.

Approximately 1,500 survey points were selected by Mary Peterson and Sandra Sneckenberger (USFWS), in consultation with Paul Miller. Official surveys began during the second week of April. Surveys at KPPSP were completed in early June largely due to wet conditions following Tropical Storm Andrea; KPPSP did not dry sufficiently until August, after the breeding season.

Five-minute point counts were conducted at 721 (of the 1,500) survey points between April and June. Habitat information (e.g., vegetation height, amount of bare ground) was recorded on arrival to each site to allow time for disturbed or flushed birds to settle (Figure 1).

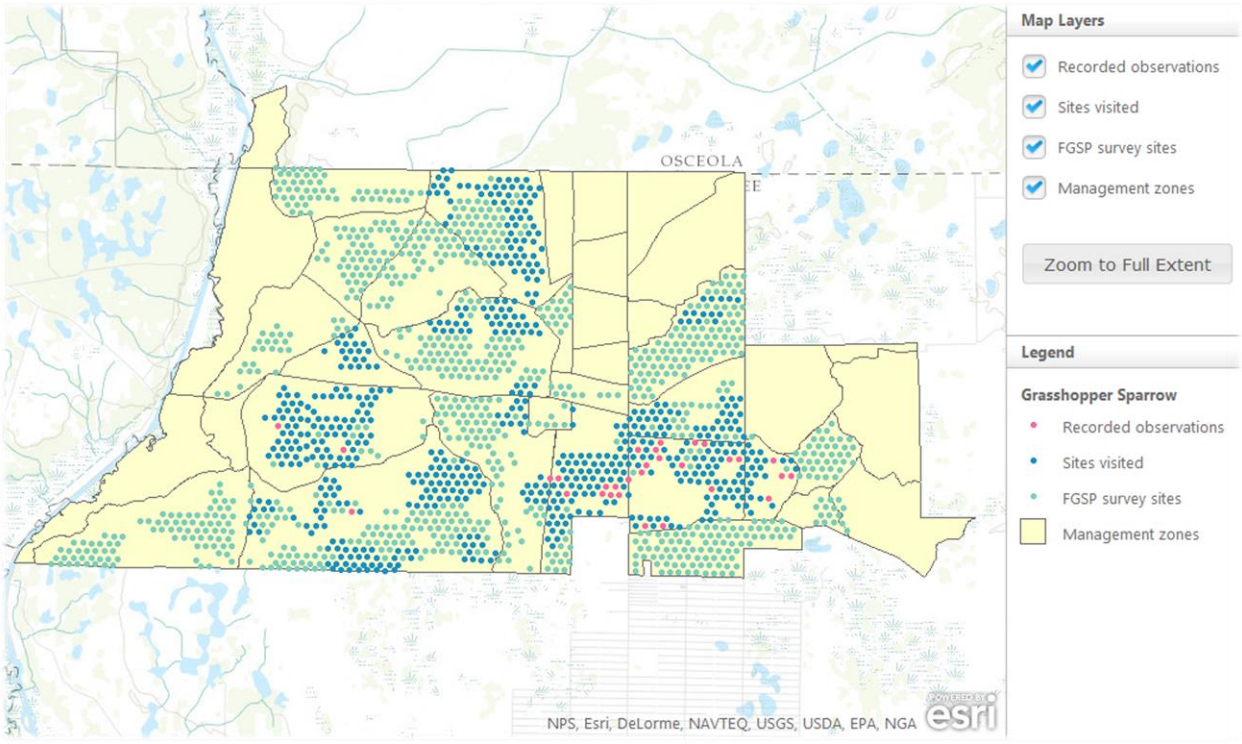

Figure 1. FGSP survey points and detections at KPPSP in 2013.

Point counts consisted of 3 minutes of listening for FGSP calls, 1 minute of playing a recorded FGSP call, and 1 additional minute of listening for FGSP calls. Thirty FGSP individuals were detected (Figure 2). Thirteen sites that had a FGSP detection were re-visited a second time but no additional FGSP detections were made.

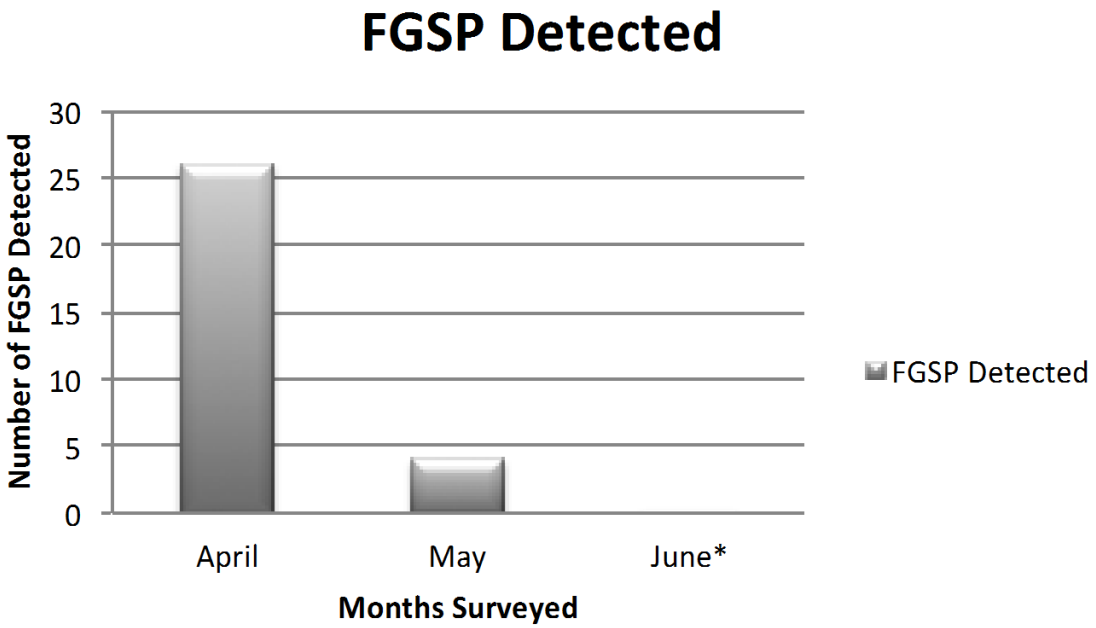

Figure 2. FGSPs detected by month. * notes that June was not a full survey month due to extreme wet conditions.

In summary, not many FGSPs were detected in the 2013 breeding season. It is likely that the high April count in April was the result of *Ammodramus savannarum pratensis* being present at KPPSP so some of these records could have been false detections. Low FGSP numbers at KPPSP could have been a result of record rainfall and early season flooding.

We will conduct another round of FGSP population surveys in the 2014 breeding season.